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THE GEORGE JUNIOR REPUBLIC.

The George Junior Republic takes its name in part from its founder, Mr. William R. George, and in part from the fact that it is a "government of the children, by the children and for the children."

Mr. George spent his boyhood on a farm, one mile distant from Freeville, Tompkins County, New York, and, going to New York City in early manhood, engaged in a variety of philanthropic labor for the welfare of little children. In April of 1890, he saw in the New York *Evening World* a pathetic account of a little street boy's sad disappointment in finding that what he supposed was a dandelion growing in the centre of City Hall Park was only a piece of orange peel. The delights of his own boyhood's home recurred to him with especial vigor after the perusal of this article, and he determined to do what he could to give to the children of the poor, a taste of those same enjoyments. Accordingly, during the years 1890 to 1895, he took from two hundred to two hundred and sixty children each year from their tenement house homes, and gave them a summer's outing. Thus far the undertaking had differed little from many others, but, in the spring of 1895, the thought flashed upon him to change his summer's camping party into a miniature republic.

The territory of the Republic is even smaller than that of San Marino, being only forty-eight acres in extent, and its buildings are few and simple. In the winter its inhabitants are only forty-four in number, twenty-seven boys and seventeen girls; and in the summer, when the tide of immigration rolls in, the population increases to two hundred and fifty, and tents are erected to supplement the few simple buildings. But within these simple environments transpire the political, industrial, educational, religious, and other

social events which the name Republic implies. Freeville, in whose vicinity the Republic is located, is a quiet country town in the southern central part of New York State, and within plain view of Ithaca and Cornell University, nine miles away to the west. The neighbors of the Republic are a simple and kindly people, who appreciate the good motives and high ideals underlying the movement, and extend a cordial welcome to it and its inhabitants.

Although Mr. George's presence and influence pervade every detail of the Republic's life they do so only indirectly, and he interferes only in case some grave moral question is involved. At first he was the Republic's president and had a veto power over its laws, but now there is a boy president, whose veto can be set aside only by a two-thirds vote of the Congress.

Congress consists of the Senate and House of Representatives, and has the power of passing laws in harmony with the United States Constitution and the laws of New York State. I will quote one or two of the laws passed by it:

"Be it enacted, That the use of tobacco in every form, including cigarettes, be prohibited in the George Junior Republic . . . and that violation of this law shall be met with a fine not less than fifty cents, nor more than ten dollars, or by from one-half day to five days imprisonment, or by both."

"Be it enacted, That any citizen found guilty of cruelty to animals shall be fined not less than five dollars nor more than twenty-five dollars."

"The right of suffrage is hereby extended to all citizens over twelve years of age without distinction of sex."

With the passage of this last act there is connected a little story which may give an insight into the workings of the Junior Republic, and which may show its similarity with conditions in the greater Republic. The girls one day awakened to the fact that they would like to vote. They accordingly petitioned Congress, and, after a hard fight, succeeded in having the bill passed. An influential boy, however, who was an especial favorite with the girls, used

his persuasive powers with them, and, chiefly by repeated assertions that it "was not nice for girls to vote," induced most of them to sign a counterpetition to the president against signing the bill. The bill was vetoed and the movement for universal suffrage for that time came to an end. A heavy poll tax, however, was levied soon after, and since girls have heads as well as boys the tax fell upon them with equal or greater severity. Accordingly another campaign of persuasion and education was entered upon and the bill became a law. The state law against swearing is also on the Republic's statute books, and, like all other laws, is rigidly enforced.

Comprising among its citizens boys and girls of most unfavorable parentage, education and environment, it is but natural that the Republic's police and judicial departments should be alert and vigorous; and alert and vigorous they most assuredly are. To be a member of the police force is the early and abiding dream of the average New York boy's life, and the applicants for this position in the Republic were so numerous that the test of a civil service examination was resorted to in order to cut down the number. The examination speedily accomplished its purpose; but it was effective also in implanting in the minds of some of the unsuccessful applicants their first strong desire to obtain the rudiments of an English education. This effect was summed up by one of them as follows: "I don't play hooky this winter, you bet! I'll come back here next year and git to be a cop!" The successful applicants are given the policeman's uniform—a blue shirt, black cap with gold braid and lettering, a policeman's belt and club, and a German silver shield with the word "Police" engraved upon it. Their salary amounts, on the average, to that of the skilled laborer. They are commanded by a chief, who divides them into platoons in charge of roundsmen. A flagrant failure to fulfill their duties meets with dismissal from the force and a fine. Their position is no sinecure,

since they are expected to quell disturbances at the risk of physical injury in attempting to make an arrest, and cowardice in such cases meets with dismissal and disgrace. The policemen are protected by the provision that any citizen resisting an officer is subject to a heavy fine or imprisonment, or both. The consequence is that, all things considered, there is a remarkable deference paid to the policeman, be he ever so small. This deference is extended to them, not only within the limits of the Republic, but also outside its borders. This was evidenced when some youths seceded from the Republic, and before they were overtaken by the police, had escaped to a distance of fifteen miles. They were just sitting down to dinner in a benevolent farmer's household when the officers arrived, and were commanded by them to return immediately, which command, in spite of the farmer's protest, was obeyed at once. The police are given the privilege of using their clubs for defence if necessary, but such cases are rigidly investigated. Be it said to the credit of these youthful policemen, that only once in two years has this privilege been resorted to, and that in the most justifiable instance.

When arrested the prisoner is taken to the police station, and a record is made of the arrest. If court is in session at the time the prisoner is at once taken before the magistrate. If it is not court hour and the offence is a minor one, he deposits a sum of money, or secures a bondsman for his appearance at the next session; but if unable to do either, he is locked up in the station house until court convenes. When the prisoner is brought before the magistrate for some minor offence he receives a regular police court trial, and is fined a slight amount, imprisoned for a few hours or a day, or discharged at the discretion of the judge,—at present a boy of sixteen. A prisoner charged with a serious offence is held for the grand jury, which is composed of boys also, and if they bring in an indictment against him, his trial is fixed for a few days later. He is then arraigned before

the criminal judge, who is now also a youth in his teens. This office was filled at first by a graduate student of law in Cornell University, but has been occupied for some time, like all other positions in the Republic, by a Junior citizen. The district attorney conducts the case for the people, and the prisoner has counsel for himself, if he be able to hire one, or, if not, is assigned one by the court. A jury of boys and girls is then secured, the trial proceeds in due form, witnesses are produced by each side, the counsel sum up, and the judge delivers his charge. The jury retires in charge of a court officer, and after due deliberation, return with the verdict. If the verdict be guilty the prisoner is sentenced to hard labor and imprisonment, or, as the boys say, "is put on the gang" for a period of time, ranging from half a day to six days, according to the offence. He is reduced to the grade of a convict, taken in charge by the keeper, his civilian's clothing is replaced by the prison uniform, which is made of bed ticking, with the stripes running around in the usual fashion. The convicts are known only by number, they cannot speak to any one during their term of imprisonment, and are locked in a cell at all times, except when their keeper has them out at work. They are obliged to work all day long, receiving no pay for their labor, and live on the plainest fare. "This is a severe punishment," says Mr. George, "but we have severe cases sometimes to deal with. I don't like this prison part, of course, but there are several hundred other things in the world at large which we do not like, but which seem to be essential. We could have made the prison part milder, to be sure, but then they would have formed a very wrong impression of the actual State Prison, and we do not wish them to glean the impression that a penal institution is a kind of picnic ground."

As to the effects of the prison system they seem to have been excellent. For instance, here is one boy's opinion of it, expressed upon his release: "If dat's what Sing Sing

is, you bet I haint goin' to git dere." And again "I've figgered it out and it costs more to be bad den good. Youse has to work harder and git no pay; sleep in a cell and git bread 'n water 'n soup an' be follered wid a gun an' hev all de blokes in de Republic down on youse, if you are bad. If youse is good, youse only hev to work ez hard ez in de prison an' git de biggest money in de camp, an' wid dat youse kin sleep in de best room in de hotel an' eat de finest feed, an' de girls an' fellers don't git down on youse like dey do if youse a prisoner. I figgered dat all out one night in de cell an' I made up me mind dat I can't afford to be bad an' I'me goin' to try now to git to de top." This sort of reasoning will appear to most readers of the ANNALS, no doubt, as a rather low sanction for good conduct; but we must remember that high individual, as well as social morality, comes slowly and step by step; and surely even this stage of thinking is a long step in advance, and often leads to higher things. The young man who made this calculation, for instance, became an industrious, law-abiding citizen, and was eventually elected speaker of the House of Representatives.

It is encouraging to note, too, that there was a striking decrease in the number of convicts as the season advanced. Thirty-two were placed on the "gang" during the first half of last summer, and only eight during the second half. The trials are not only interesting in themselves, but the solemnity, gravity and earnestness of the judge and all parties concerned are evidence of the fact that they are regarded in no frivolous light, but have taken their due importance in the minds of the citizens. Another encouraging fact is that boys who have been indifferent or insolent in the presence of an adult magistrate have been impressed at once when brought before a jury of their peers, and several of the most hardened have broken down and wept when sentenced by their boy judges. Indeed Mr. George told me of an actual case of attempted suicide on the part of a prisoner newly sentenced.

As in our own Republic, there is behind the Junior Republic's legislative and judicial departments a well organized militia, including all of the boy citizens. Between 6 and 7.30 a. m. and 5.30 and 6.30 p. m., six days in the week, the boys are put through the course of evolutions and involutions known as a military drill. When I visited the Republic the fields were covered with snow, and whatever else the drill may result in, it was productive at that time of a large amount of physical exercise.

There is a vast amount of enthusiasm for everything American in this miniature Republic, and it is sought to direct this into channels of patriotism and love for the big Republic by elaborate ceremonies when raising and lowering the "Stars and Stripes," by singing patriotic songs and declaiming patriotic addresses.

I have dwelt somewhat *in extenso* upon the governmental part of the Republic's life, because the experiment is a most interesting one in the direction of applying the American idea of self-government to the control of boys and girls, many of whom have been pronounced incorrigible; and because the success met with in the enforcement of good conduct affords much encouragement to those who believe in the truth and efficiency of that idea.

Turning from the government to industry, we find quite a diversity of pursuits, and many features of the big Republic's industrial system. At first, industry was carried on by means of industrial classes, the citizens being enrolled in them, and paid according to the number of hours spent in the acquisition of technical knowledge. But now, contracts for the performance of certain tasks are sold by the government to citizens, who must employ their own laborers, and assume the responsibility of loss or profit. The wages paid are from fifty to seventy cents a day, and the labor day is from 8.30 to 12.00. The forty-eight acres in the farm are put to very good use, and farming or trucking is supplemented by landscape gardening. The class

system was done away with and the contract system substituted in accordance with Mr. George's aim to introduce into the Republic as many of the conditions of ordinary life as is possible; and now that each citizen must assume the responsibility of obtaining employment, a long step has been made in the direction of *laissez faire*. It is true that all industrial tasks instead of a certain few, are still looked upon as public work. The contracts sold by the government are many and varied. For instance, one boy has purchased the privilege of giving to the boy citizens their weekly bath, the taking of which is enforced by fine and imprisonment; another boy has purchased the privilege of conducting a barber shop; several have the contract of providing lodgings for the citizens and of furnishing their meals. The hotels, as they are called, are of three grades, from the Hotel Waldorf, on the second floor of the main building, where the millionaires sleep, and pay twenty-five cents per night for the privilege of having a tastily furnished room to themselves, to the lowest class of lodgings in the attic, where the unsuccessful business men or the idlers must take up their quarters, at ten cents a night. If the citizen has no money to pay for lodgings he must pass the night in the station house, and in the morning is arrested for vagrancy and made to work out the fine imposed. Each hotel keeper must maintain order in his establishment, and is arrested and fined for a failure to do so. He must call in the police to quell disturbances, eject disorderly guests, or refuse to receive those who are likely to become such. He must also hire servants and keep his establishment clean and presentable, or be fined by the inspector for failing to do so. The inspector is employed by the government, and makes his rounds twice daily, accompanied by Mrs. George, who fines the inspector if he fails to discover any faults of omission or commission. A small boy of fourteen was proprietor of the restaurant during my visit, and a most business-like boy he was. The tables in

his establishment are divided into three classes: those where fifteen cents a meal is charged, and where the masses—but not the unwashed masses—take their meals; those where twenty-five cents a meal is charged, and which are called the Applicants' Tables, because they are used by citizens who have not yet proved by their manners that they deserve to be admitted to the third class of tables, known as Aristocrats' Tables. This arrangement is rather undemocratic, to be sure, but it is relied upon, and with good reason, as a means of cultivating the ways of polite society. The utmost of good form and politeness prevail at the Aristocrats' Tables, and even more of it, if that be possible, at the Candidates' Tables; and even at the lowest class of tables, although there is sometimes a superfluity of boisterous mirth, there is, on the whole, a degree of order which is remarkable when the character and age of the guests are considered. Mr. and Mrs. George regularly take their meals at the restaurant, and share precisely the same kinds of food as that furnished to the citizens. Fortunately the restaurant proprietor is able to employ the services of an adult cook, but his assistant cooks and waiters are engaged from among the citizens. In addition to the numerous contracts of this character which are let by the government, many other employments have sprung up. The boys become carpenters, retail venders of fruits, candies and other commodities dear to children's hearts, public officials, lawyers, and skilled laborers of various kinds. The girls turn to sewing, clothes patching, stocking darning and housework. Everything which is worn, eaten or otherwise enjoyed must be bought by the citizens and paid for. Once a week pay-day comes and with it a general squaring up of accounts with the government and between the citizens. The money used is made of round tin discs, stamped with the Republic's name, and corresponding in size and amount with United States one dollar, fifty cents, twenty-five cents, ten cents, five cents, and one cent pieces. It is current, of

course, only within the Republic, the various supplies of food and clothing being contributed by the farmers and churches of the surrounding region, and by an association of benevolent people in New York City. Twenty-five hundred dollars in cash and sixteen hundred dollars worth of provisions were contributed last year. It is the ideal of course to make the children's labor productive of a good deal more wealth than has yet been possible, and to make the Republic more nearly self-sustaining. Meanwhile the children themselves get nothing which they do not earn. Some fall to lower and lower kinds of food and clothing, or climb to higher and higher lodgings, until they become paupers and are fed at government expense on bread and water, a provision passed by Congress itself, the author of the measure declaring that "A feller wot won't work shan't eat." Chronic pauperism is dealt with by the government, which enforces labor, and rewards very sparingly, until the lesson is learned that it does not "pay" to be a pauper, any more than to be a criminal. Some take the other road, and amass sufficient wealth to enjoy meals at "Delmonico's," and a room in the "Waldorf," or to invest it in various business enterprises, even to the extent of becoming a banker. The banker receives money on deposit, loans it on interest or invests it in some enterprise of his own. Sometimes confidence in the bank is lost, a run on it is made, and it is forced to close its doors, just as in the big world outside,—although the banker usually stands a series of lawsuits, instead of making a hurried trip abroad.

When the summer citizens return to their homes in the autumn, a public sale of contributed clothing, food, and sundry commodities is held, and those who have saved a surplus invest it in things suitable for their own needs and those of their parents and brothers or sisters. Those who have squandered their money on luxuries, or failed to save any, return home empty handed, and sometimes in a decidedly tattered condition, much to their own and their

relatives' dissatisfaction, but it is to be hoped to their permanent enlightenment. The industrious and the thrifty, on the other hand, carry home with them supplies of potatoes and other vegetables which suffice for their families' consumption during several succeeding months.

The economic questions which are continually arising are very similar to those which have long puzzled the heads of American citizens. For instance, at one time the government was too lavish in payment for work done under contract; the currency became inflated, prices increased four, five and even ten-fold, speculation was rife, and then came a panic, followed by a period of financial depression and general ruin. The question, how to return to a "gold basis," was long and earnestly debated, but probably the answer to it can yield American Congressmen no enlightenment. Another question which arose was that of foreign competition and protection to home industries. Congress at one time passed a law permitting citizens who paid the government five dollars for the privilege, to go outside of the Republic's borders. These citizens brought back with them apples and sundry other commodities which had been given them in the course of their travels, and proceeded to undersell the regular venders of those commodities. This caused much dissatisfaction, and Congress, after considering a variety of plans for solving the problem, drifted unconsciously into the system of a protective tariff. When such problems arise it is Mr. George's policy to leave to the boys the solution of them, his aim being to fix upon the citizens themselves the responsibility for their own acts, and to permit them to learn by experience.

Naturally the mental development of the citizens is a desideratum, and Mr. George's plan of education is, to say the least, a novel one. It is for the government to employ one or two of the oldest and most matured citizens to act in the capacity of schoolmasters. Questions are obtained by them from grammars, arithmetics, geographies and other

text-books, and distributed amongst the citizens, who are enrolled in appropriate classes. The answers to these questions must be obtained from suitable books and written upon paper in a prescribed form. They are then given to the schoolmasters, who examine them, and accept or reject them, acceptance meaning the payment of a certain sum of money to the author of the answers, and rejection meaning no pecuniary reward. The schoolmasters and the work presented to them are subjected to investigation by the inspector. In this way a new method of furnishing employment to the citizens is secured in those seasons when out-of-door work is relatively scarce, and the acquirement of an education is sought to be made dependent upon the acquisition of daily subsistence. From the industrial point of view the method is successful, and from the educational point of view it results in familiarity with certain facts and the cultivation of a certain degree of accuracy and order; whether it will result in an education is a question which only further experience can answer. Some of the citizens are sent to public schools in the vicinity, and two of the youths are attending the neighboring high school, preparatory to entering Cornell University. The report of their instructors as to the character of work done under them determines the amount of their remuneration. One interesting development, of the educational system is what is known as the college. This means a weekly lecture to the assembled citizens by one of their number who has been appointed for the detailed investigation of a specific topic. His information is secured by a patient research in the well-appointed library, which has been contributed by a benevolent gentleman, and which is housed in one of the brightest, most tastefully decorated rooms to be met with anywhere. In addition to school and college, literary and musical entertainments are frequent, and in the evenings there are home-like meetings and pleasant talks around the library fireside. The spiritual welfare of the children is also looked

after most carefully and devotedly, morning and evening prayers being held at the Republic, and the children attending Sunday services in the churches in the neighboring town.

Life at the Republic is not all politics, work and study. Mr. George's original idea was to bring into the lives of the children of the slums some of the brightness and happiness which surrounds children in more favorable circumstances, and he has not by any means lost sight of this idea. The prevailing spirit of good humor and evident happiness at once impresses the visitor. Athletics are indulged in. Baseball and football teams have been organized; the snow-clad hills afford coasting, and a neighboring stream skating in winter and swimming in summer. Modern athletics are not complete unless accompanied by a "yell," and this important feature is not wanting at the Republic. Their "yell" may be of interest, as it is as musical as most of its kind, and gives us instructive glimpses of the philosophy of life which prevails at the Republic. It is as follows:

"Hear ye this!

Down with the boss; down with the tramp;
Down with the pauper; down with the scamp;
Up with the freeman; up with the wise;
Up with the thrifty; on to the prize;
Who are we? why, we are,
Citizens of the G. J. R. :
We love our land and we would die,
To keep Old Glory in the sky."

The citizens are placed in Mr. George's care, either through sentence of city magistrates, or agreement on the part of the parents. Most of them are between the ages of twelve and fifteen years. The few who fall below this limit, accepted because of unusual circumstances, are placed in the care of guardians, that is, boy or girl citizens older than themselves, who are held responsible for their industry, cleanliness, and general good conduct. These youthful guardians are expected to use persuasion, and, if necessary,

mild coercion, in order to cultivate good habits on the part of their wards; and, lest at any time the guardian should use undue severity, a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was formed on their own initiative by other citizens of the Republic. There has been no occasion, however, for activity on the part of this society, the guardians being monuments of long-suffering and patience. Their ideas of the rearing of young children are naturally of much interest and of surprising wisdom.

Perhaps the most noteworthy fact in connection with the George Junior Republic is that boys and girls of the character and antecedents of the citizens are so quickly caught up into the spirit of industry and good order which pervades the Republic. This desirable result is due, doubtless, to the responsibility which is placed upon them and to the confidence which is manifested toward them; but also, and doubtless chiefly, to the silent and unobtrusive, but all-pervading influence for the good of Mr. George and his wife.

If we are consistent believers in the American political theory, we must admit that the machinery adopted by the founders of the George Junior Republic for carrying on their work is the best which the mind of man has developed. But mere machinery is useless without a motive force, and this motive force is largely supplied by the clever brain and kindly heart of Mr. George. In this experiment, as in all other social service, Mrs. Browning's dictum is true, that

“ . . . It takes a soul
To move a body: it takes a high souled man
To move the masses—even to a cleaner sty:
It takes the ideal to blow a hair's breadth off
The dust of the actual.—Ah, your Fouriers failed
Because not poets enough to understand
That life develops from within.”

WILLIAM I. HULL.

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